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United States Department of Agriculture

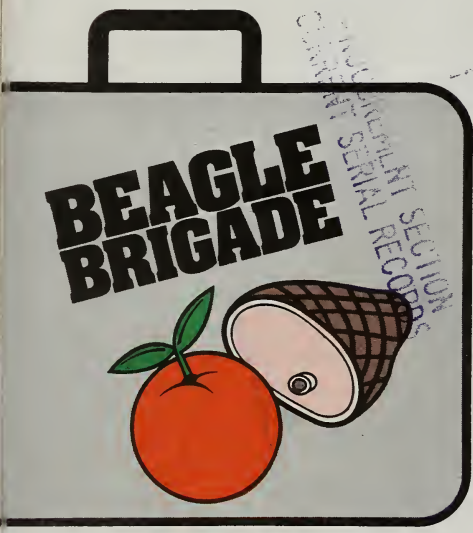
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

Program Aid No. 1083

JPS

# Travelers' Tips

On Bringing Food, Plant,  
and Animal Products into  
the United States





**Cover:** Agriculture's detector dog team, the Beagle Brigade, is on duty at a number of international airports. The Beagle Brigade has come to symbolize the effort to keep out plant and animal pests and diseases. Each dog works leashed under the constant supervision of a handler while sniffing for prohibited meat and fruit.

## **A Special Message for Travelers**

Please take a few minutes to become familiar with restrictions on bringing agricultural products into the United States. This booklet lists acceptable agricultural products and tells you about other products that require permits or are prohibited.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture places limits on items brought to the United States from foreign countries as well as those brought to the mainland from Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Prohibited items can harbor foreign animal and plant pests and diseases that could seriously damage America's crops, livestock, pets, and the environment.

Because of this threat, you are required to declare any meats, fruits, vegetables, plants, animals, and plant and animal products you are bringing. Your declaration must cover all items carried in your baggage and hand luggage or in your vehicle.

### **One Piece Can Spell Danger**

Travelers often are surprised when told that their "one little piece of fruit or meat" can cause serious damage. In fact, one item carelessly discarded can wreak havoc in American crops. For example, it's quite likely that a traveler carried in the wormy fruit that brought Mediterranean fruit flies to California in 1979. The 3-year fight to eradicate this pest cost more than \$100 million.

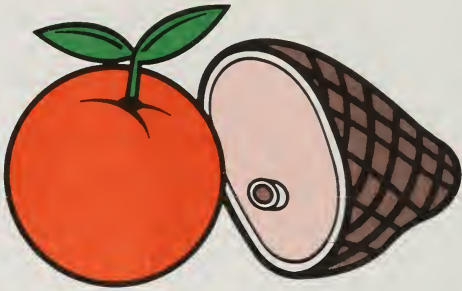
A single link of sausage contaminated with the dreaded virus of foot-and-mouth disease can do similar damage to the livestock business. Foot-and-mouth disease last struck the United States in 1929. Economists say that an outbreak today would cost farmers and consumers billions of dollars in lost production, higher food prices, and lost export markets.

### **Declarations Prevent Fines**

The declaration you're required to make may be oral, written, or both. If you're traveling from abroad on a plane or ship, you will be given a Customs form on which to declare your agricultural products. You also will be asked to indicate whether you have visited a farm or ranch outside the United States.

Officers of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service inspect passenger baggage for undeclared agricultural products. At some ports, they use beagle dogs to sniff out hidden items. At other ports, they use low-energy X-ray machines adapted to reveal fruits and meats.

Smugglers get caught. In an average month, 1,250 violations are uncovered. The traveler who fails to declare a prohibited item is fined on the spot (up to \$50 or more), and the item is confiscated.



### **Fruits, Vegetables, and Plants**

You may bring in some fruits, vegetables, and plants without advance permission, provided they are declared, inspected, and found free of pests. However, you must get a permit in advance to bring in certain plants and plant parts intended for growing.

For information and permit applications, write: Permit Unit, USDA, APHIS, PPQ, 6505 Belcrest Road, Hyattsville, MD 20782. To bring back endangered plant species, you also will need permits from the country of origin as well as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (see p. 8).

### **Meat and Animal Products**

Regulations prohibit you from bringing in fresh, dried, and canned meats and meat products from most foreign countries. If any meat is used in preparing a product, it is prohibited. Commercially canned meat is allowed if the inspector can determine that the meat was cooked in the can after it was sealed to make it shelf-stable without refrigeration.

Hunting trophies, game-animal carcasses, and hides are severely restricted. If you intend to bring them in, write for applicable information and forms.

Address: Import/Export and Emergency Planning Staff, USDA, APHIS, VS, 6505 Belcrest Road, Hyattsville, MD 20782.

### **Live Animals and Birds**

Live animals and birds can enter only subject to certification, permits, inspection, and quarantine rules that vary with the animal and its origin. Dogs that have been in Central and South America pose a special health hazard if they have wounds infested with screwworms. If your dog has even a small wound, be sure to have it treated before

you travel to the United States. The U.S. Public Health Service further restricts imports of dogs, cats, monkeys, and turtles (see p. 8),

Pet birds you purchased abroad for your personal use can enter, subject to restrictions by some State departments of agriculture, if quarantined by USDA for 30 days. Make quarantine arrangements in advance because facilities are limited and available only at certain ports. For information and a permit application, write Import/Export and Emergency Planning at the address listed previously.

No Federal quarantine is required for personally owned U.S. pet birds returning to the United States. Bring along a valid U.S. veterinary health certificate that individually identifies each bird by referring to a leg band or tattoo. Be sure to keep your bird separated from other birds while out of the country. No Federal quarantine is required for pet birds originating in Canada.

### **Other Biological Materials**

You must have a permit to bring in most organisms, cells and cultures, monoclonal antibodies, vaccines, and related substances, whether of plant or animal origin. This includes organisms and products used in the biotechnology industry. For information and a permit application, write Import/Export and Emergency Planning at the address listed previously.

### **Soil, Sand, Minerals, and Shells**

Soil-borne organisms threaten both plants and animals. If you visited a farm or ranch overseas, agricultural inspectors may have to disinfect your shoes or clothes. Vehicles also must be cleaned of soil.

You may not bring in any soil, earth, or sand, although 1 ounce or less of decorative beach sand is allowed. Rocks, minerals, and shells are allowed, but all sand and soil must be cleaned off. Products grown in soil (like shamrocks and truffles) must be free of soil.

### **What You Can Bring Back**

When you plan your trip abroad, check the lists of approved products. If you're unsure of what's allowed, call for help. Look in your phone book for the nearest office of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Plant Protection and Quarantine; or call the central office at (301) 436-8645. The agricultural inspector at your U.S. port of departure also can answer many of your questions, as can some U.S. consulates abroad.

Note that agricultural products of U.S. origin taken out of the United States may not be allowed back into the country. Check with a U.S. border inspector before taking such goods across the border.

## General List of Approved Products

This list covers products from all areas except Canada, Mexico, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

*Bamboo*, dried poles only

*Beads made of seeds* (but not jequirity beans)

*Breads, cakes, cookies and other bakery goods*

*Candies*

*Cheeses*, fully cured (but not cottage cheeses)

*Coconuts* (but husks or milk must be removed)

*Coffee*, roasted beans only

*Cones of trees*, like pine cones

*Dried foods*, including polished rice, beans, and tea

*Fish*

*Flower bulbs* (but not gladiolus bulbs from Africa, Italy, Malta, and Portugal)

*Flowers*, most fresh or dried kinds (but not with roots)

*Fruits*, canned or dried products only

*Herbarium plants* (but not witchweed)

*Herbs*, dried, for medicinal use

*Meats*, canned (for restrictions, see p. 4).

*Mushrooms*

*Nuts* (but not chestnuts or acorns or nuts with outer husks)

*Sauces*, canned or processed

*Seaweed*

*Seeds* (but not avocado, bamboo, barberry, coconuts, corn, cotton, cucumber, currant, elm, hibiscus, lentil, mahonia, mango, melon, pearl millet, potato, pumpkin, rice, sorghum, squash, and wheat)

*Shamrocks*, without roots or soil

*Soup and soup mixes* (but not those containing meat)

*Spices*, dried (but not curry leaves)

*Straw animals, bats, baskets, and other souvenirs* (but not items stuffed with straw)

*Vegetables*, canned or processed.

## Approved Products from Canada

Most products produced or grown in Canada are allowed. This includes vegetables; fruits other than black currants; and meat and dressed poultry, if accompanied by proof of origin.

## Approved Products from Mexico

Products must have been produced or grown in Mexico. For meats, proof of origin is required.

*Acorns*

*Bananas*

*Blackberries*

*Cactus fruits*



*Cerimans*  
*Coconuts* (but husks or  
milk must be removed)  
*Corn husks*  
*Dates*  
*Dewberries*  
*Grapes*  
*Litchis*  
*Meats* (but not pork or  
uncooked poultry)

*Melons*  
*Mexican jumping beans*  
*Nuts*  
*Papayas*  
*Pineapples*  
*Strawberries*  
*Tamarind bean pods*  
*Vegetables* (but not potatoes,  
sweetpotatoes, or yams).

### Approved Products from Hawaii

Products must have been produced or grown in Hawaii.

<i>Coconuts</i> (but not for travelers going to Florida)	<i>Pineapples</i>
<i>Coffee</i> (roasted only)	<i>Insects</i> , dried and preserved
<i>Flowers</i> , including leis (but not mauna loas, gardenias, jade vines, and roses)	<i>Meats</i>
<i>Papayas</i> (only if officially certified)	<i>Nuts</i>
	<i>Seeds</i> , including seed jewelry and leis
	<i>Sugar</i> (but not sugarcane)
	<i>Wood roses</i> .

### Approved Products from Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands

Products must have been produced or grown in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

<i>Avocados</i>	<i>Herbs</i> , dried, for medicinal purposes
<i>Bananas</i>	<i>Leeks</i>
<i>Beans</i> , fresh shelled	<i>Meats</i>
<i>Breadfruits</i>	<i>Nuts</i>
<i>Breadnuts</i>	<i>Onions</i>
<i>Cacao beans</i>	<i>Papayas</i>
<i>Calabazas</i>	<i>Peas</i>
<i>Chayotes</i>	<i>Pineapples</i>
<i>Citrus fruits</i> (but not for travelers going to ports south of Baltimore Md.)	<i>Plantains</i>
<i>Coconuts</i> (but not if going to Florida and Hawaii)	<i>Pumpkins</i>
<i>Coriander</i>	<i>Quenepas</i>
<i>Eggplant</i>	<i>Root crops</i> , most kinds
<i>Garlic</i>	<i>Seeds</i> , dried
<i>Ginger root</i>	<i>Squash</i>
<i>Gourds</i>	<i>Strawberries</i>
	<i>Tamarind bean pods</i> .

## Information on Other Federal Requirements

**The U.S. Customs Service** collects import duties (tax) and assists the U.S. Public Health Service in regulating the import of dogs, cats, monkeys and birds. Publications: "Know Before You Go (Customs Hints for Returning Residents)" and "Pets, Wildlife, U.S. Customs." Address: U.S. Customs Service, P.O. Box 7474, Washington, DC 20044.

**The U.S. Department of State** issues travel documents for U.S. citizens and visitors. Publication: "Your Trip Abroad." Contact: Passport agencies located in Boston, Chicago, Honolulu, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New Orleans, New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Seattle, Stamford, and Washington, D.C., or a U.S. consulate abroad.

**The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service** restricts or prohibits wild animals and endangered animals and their products. Publications: "Facts About Federal Wildlife Laws" and "Buyer Beware Guide." Address: Federal Wildlife Permit Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, DC 20240.

